



FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF
THE CHAIRMAN

June 22, 2020

The Honorable Richard Blumenthal
United States Senate
706 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Blumenthal:

I write in response to your letter regarding the COVID-19 pandemic and the Commission's implementation of its \$200 million COVID-19 Telehealth Program established under the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act. The ongoing pandemic has made clear how important telemedicine is for keeping Americans connected to their doctors, avoiding potential exposure to the virus by health care providers and other patients, and maintaining the social distancing necessary to slow the spread of the disease. I am committed to continuing to use the resources at the FCC's disposal to deal with this unprecedented national emergency.

I'm thankful Congress included \$200 million in the CARES Act for the FCC to establish a COVID-19 Telehealth Program to help health care providers expand connected care services to patients at their homes or mobile locations. Shortly after enactment of the CARES Act on March 27, I presented draft rules for the COVID-19 Telehealth Program to my fellow commissioners.

And on March 31, 2020, the Commission unanimously voted to establish the COVID-19 Telehealth Program and provide immediate support to eligible health care providers responding to the COVID-19 pandemic by fully funding their telecommunications services, information services, and devices necessary to provide critical connected care services to combat the pandemic. Using a streamlined application process, the Commission directed staff to review applications on a rolling basis and prioritize applications in regions hardest hit by the pandemic, where the medical impact of funding would be the greatest, and applications that would benefit high-risk and vulnerable patients.

Then, within three weeks after Congress passed the CARES Act, the FCC created the application process, opened the application window, and approved the first set of funding requests. Unsurprisingly, there's tremendous interest in and demand for COVID-19 Telehealth Program funding for connected care services. To date, Commission staff have approved 367 applications for a total of \$128.23 million in awards to providers in 45 states and the District of Columbia, including providers focused on Native American populations, such as the Navajo Nation Department of Health, the Native American Community Clinic in Minneapolis, Minnesota, and the Indian Health Center of Santa Clara Valley in northern California.

The agency's decision-making has been meaningfully informed by collaboration and consultation. In particular, Commission staff consulted with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and based on those discussions, Commission staff has identified "hardest-hit areas" using data from the Johns Hopkins Coronavirus Resource Center. Importantly, the agency has taken into account both infection rates and confirmed death rates, so that our assessments do not

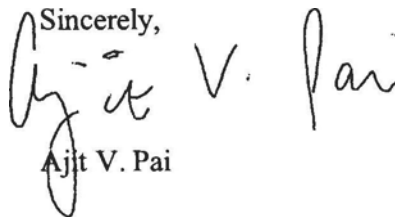
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We have taken several steps to ensure that healthcare providers have the information needed to participate in the program. The Commission maintains a dedicated COVID-19 Telehealth web page. Staff has issued several public notices to help educate prospective applicants about the program and the application process. It has also issued FAQs and has held a webinar providing helpful information and instructions on completing the COVID-19 Telehealth Program application. Commission staff also have participated in conference calls and webinars with stakeholders from all over the country, including outreach to Tribes, rural service organizations, health care organizations, and organizations that seek to reach the medically underserved. And I have personally and repeatedly advertised the program, including my encouragement to health care providers to apply and notation of each round of application grants.

The steps we have taken thus far have been very well received, not least by the recipient health care institutions and the communities they serve. But we also want to assess after the Program's conclusion how COVID-19 Telehealth Program funding was spent and lessons that could improve the Commission's upcoming Connected Care Pilot Program. Participants are expected to report to the Commission on the effectiveness of this funding on health outcomes, patient treatment, health care facility administration, and any other relevant factors.

The Commission appreciates the responsibility entrusted to us by the authors of the CARES Act, including you, and I assure you that we are sparing no effort to make the COVID-19 Telehealth Program a success. We are proud of our role in helping health care providers obtain the necessary telecommunications services, information services, and devices they need to provide telehealth services in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Please let me know if I can be of any further assistance.

Sincerely,

Ajit V. Pai



FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF
THE CHAIRMAN

June 22, 2020

The Honorable Cory Booker
United States Senate
717 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Booker:

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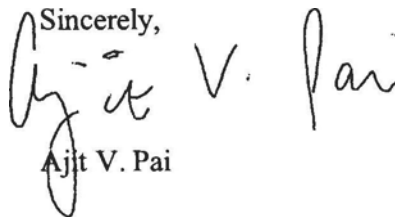
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Ajit V. Pai



FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF
THE CHAIRMAN

June 22, 2020

The Honorable Tammy Duckworth
United States Senate
524 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Duckworth:

I write in response to your letter regarding the COVID-19 pandemic and the Commission's implementation of its \$200 million COVID-19 Telehealth Program established under the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act. The ongoing pandemic has made clear how important telemedicine is for keeping Americans connected to their doctors, avoiding potential exposure to the virus by health care providers and other patients, and maintaining the social distancing necessary to slow the spread of the disease. I am committed to continuing to use the resources at the FCC's disposal to deal with this unprecedented national emergency.

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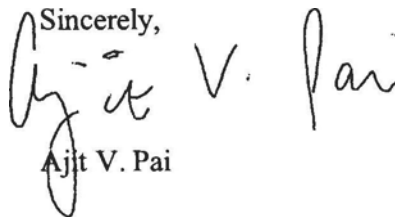
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Ajit V. Pai



FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF
THE CHAIRMAN

June 22, 2020

The Honorable Richard J. Durbin
United States Senate
711 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Durbin:

I write in response to your letter regarding the COVID-19 pandemic and the Commission's implementation of its \$200 million COVID-19 Telehealth Program established under the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act. The ongoing pandemic has made clear how important telemedicine is for keeping Americans connected to their doctors, avoiding potential exposure to the virus by health care providers and other patients, and maintaining the social distancing necessary to slow the spread of the disease. I am committed to continuing to use the resources at the FCC's disposal to deal with this unprecedented national emergency.

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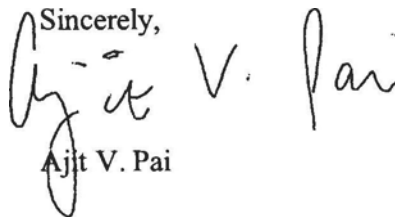
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FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF
THE CHAIRMAN

June 22, 2020

The Honorable Kirsten Gillibrand
United States Senate
478 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Gillibrand:

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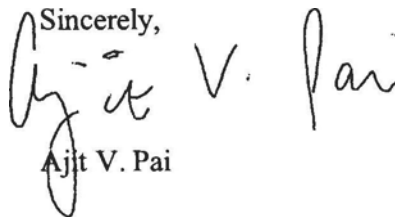
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FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF
THE CHAIRMAN

June 22, 2020

The Honorable Kamala D. Harris
United States Senate
112 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

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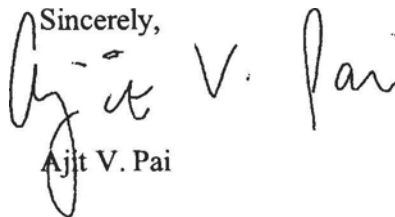
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FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF
THE CHAIRMAN

June 22, 2020

The Honorable Mazie K. Hirono
United States Senate
730 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

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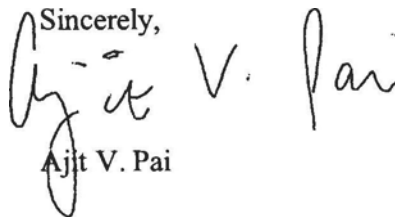
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The Commission appreciates the responsibility entrusted to us by the authors of the CARES Act, including you, and I assure you that we are sparing no effort to make the COVID-19 Telehealth Program a success. We are proud of our role in helping health care providers obtain the necessary telecommunications services, information services, and devices they need to provide telehealth services in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Please let me know if I can be of any further assistance.

Sincerely,

Ajit V. Pai



FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF
THE CHAIRMAN

June 22, 2020

The Honorable Amy Klobuchar
United States Senate
425 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Klobuchar:

I write in response to your letter regarding the COVID-19 pandemic and the Commission's implementation of its \$200 million COVID-19 Telehealth Program established under the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act. The ongoing pandemic has made clear how important telemedicine is for keeping Americans connected to their doctors, avoiding potential exposure to the virus by health care providers and other patients, and maintaining the social distancing necessary to slow the spread of the disease. I am committed to continuing to use the resources at the FCC's disposal to deal with this unprecedented national emergency.

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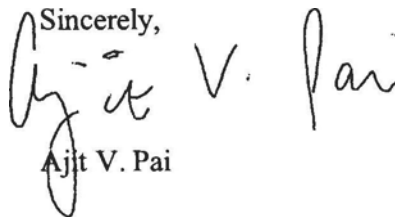
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FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF
THE CHAIRMAN

June 22, 2020

The Honorable Edward J. Markey
United States Senate
255 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Markey:

I write in response to your letter regarding the COVID-19 pandemic and the Commission's implementation of its \$200 million COVID-19 Telehealth Program established under the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act. The ongoing pandemic has made clear how important telemedicine is for keeping Americans connected to their doctors, avoiding potential exposure to the virus by health care providers and other patients, and maintaining the social distancing necessary to slow the spread of the disease. I am committed to continuing to use the resources at the FCC's disposal to deal with this unprecedented national emergency.

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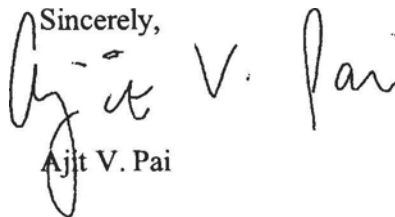
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FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF
THE CHAIRMAN

June 22, 2020

The Honorable Catherine Cortez Masto
United States Senate
516 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Cortez Masto:

I write in response to your letter regarding the COVID-19 pandemic and the Commission's implementation of its \$200 million COVID-19 Telehealth Program established under the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act. The ongoing pandemic has made clear how important telemedicine is for keeping Americans connected to their doctors, avoiding potential exposure to the virus by health care providers and other patients, and maintaining the social distancing necessary to slow the spread of the disease. I am committed to continuing to use the resources at the FCC's disposal to deal with this unprecedented national emergency.

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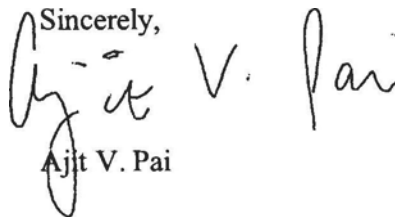
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FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF
THE CHAIRMAN

June 22, 2020

The Honorable Jeff Merkley
United States Senate
313 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Merkley:

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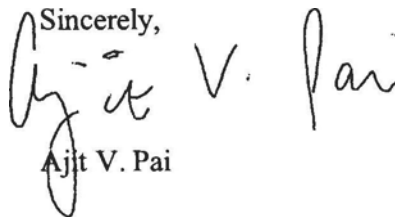
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FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF
THE CHAIRMAN

June 22, 2020

The Honorable Jack Reed
United States Senate
728 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Reed:

I write in response to your letter regarding the COVID-19 pandemic and the Commission's implementation of its \$200 million COVID-19 Telehealth Program established under the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act. The ongoing pandemic has made clear how important telemedicine is for keeping Americans connected to their doctors, avoiding potential exposure to the virus by health care providers and other patients, and maintaining the social distancing necessary to slow the spread of the disease. I am committed to continuing to use the resources at the FCC's disposal to deal with this unprecedented national emergency.

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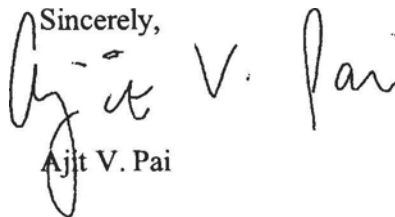
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FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF
THE CHAIRMAN

June 22, 2020

The Honorable Jacky Rosen
United States Senate
G12 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Rosen:

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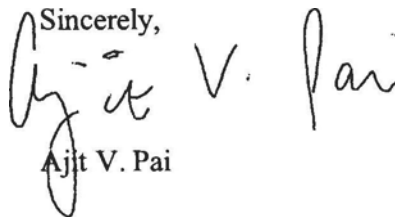
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Sincerely,

Ajit V. Pai



FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF
THE CHAIRMAN

June 22, 2020

The Honorable Brian Schatz
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Technology, Innovation, and the Internet
Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation
United States Senate
722 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Schatz:

I write in response to your letter regarding the COVID-19 pandemic and the Commission's implementation of its \$200 million COVID-19 Telehealth Program established under the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act. The ongoing pandemic has made clear how important telemedicine is for keeping Americans connected to their doctors, avoiding potential exposure to the virus by health care providers and other patients, and maintaining the social distancing necessary to slow the spread of the disease. I am committed to continuing to use the resources at the FCC's disposal to deal with this unprecedented national emergency.

I'm thankful Congress included \$200 million in the CARES Act for the FCC to establish a COVID-19 Telehealth Program to help health care providers expand connected care services to patients at their homes or mobile locations. Shortly after enactment of the CARES Act on March 27, I presented draft rules for the COVID-19 Telehealth Program to my fellow commissioners.

And on March 31, 2020, the Commission unanimously voted to establish the COVID-19 Telehealth Program and provide immediate support to eligible health care providers responding to the COVID-19 pandemic by fully funding their telecommunications services, information services, and devices necessary to provide critical connected care services to combat the pandemic. Using a streamlined application process, the Commission directed staff to review applications on a rolling basis and prioritize applications in regions hardest hit by the pandemic, where the medical impact of funding would be the greatest, and applications that would benefit high-risk and vulnerable patients.

Then, within three weeks after Congress passed the CARES Act, the FCC created the application process, opened the application window, and approved the first set of funding requests. Unsurprisingly, there's tremendous interest in and demand for COVID-19 Telehealth Program funding for connected care services. To date, Commission staff have approved 367 applications for a total of \$128.23 million in awards to providers in 45 states and the District of Columbia, including providers focused on Native American populations, such as the Navajo Nation Department of Health, the Native American Community Clinic in Minneapolis, Minnesota, and the Indian Health Center of Santa Clara Valley in northern California.

The agency's decision-making has been meaningfully informed by collaboration and consultation. In particular, Commission staff consulted with the Centers for Disease Control and

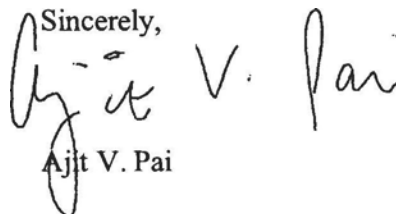
Prevention, and based on those discussions, Commission staff has identified “hardest-hit areas” using data from the Johns Hopkins Coronavirus Resource Center. Importantly, the agency has taken into account both infection rates and confirmed death rates, so that our assessments do not inadvertently overlook areas with limited testing resources. In prioritizing applications from hardest-hit areas, Commission staff takes a holistic view of applications, considering where support would have the most positive impact on health care needs—for example, applications that would serve Tribal areas, applications that would serve other at-risk patients, the number of patients being served, the strain on health care providers, rural hospital closures, and broadband access. I believe that the process developed by staff has been effective in targeting funding to areas in need. For example, New York healthcare providers have been awarded the most funding to date, which makes sense given that the Empire State was an early epicenter of the pandemic and has been the hardest hit state. However, it is also important to note that the agency continues to assess needs in real-time, as evidenced by the announcement of two awards last week for healthcare providers in Yakima, Washington, a new hotspot in the West.

We have taken several steps to ensure that healthcare providers have the information needed to participate in the program. The Commission maintains a dedicated COVID-19 Telehealth web page. Staff has issued several public notices to help educate prospective applicants about the program and the application process. It has also issued FAQs and has held a webinar providing helpful information and instructions on completing the COVID-19 Telehealth Program application. Commission staff also have participated in conference calls and webinars with stakeholders from all over the country, including outreach to Tribes, rural service organizations, health care organizations, and organizations that seek to reach the medically underserved. And I have personally and repeatedly advertised the program, including my encouragement to health care providers to apply and notation of each round of application grants.

The steps we have taken thus far have been very well received, not least by the recipient health care institutions and the communities they serve. But we also want to assess after the Program’s conclusion how COVID-19 Telehealth Program funding was spent and lessons that could improve the Commission’s upcoming Connected Care Pilot Program. Participants are expected to report to the Commission on the effectiveness of this funding on health outcomes, patient treatment, health care facility administration, and any other relevant factors.

The Commission appreciates the responsibility entrusted to us by the authors of the CARES Act, including you, and I assure you that we are sparing no effort to make the COVID-19 Telehealth Program a success. We are proud of our role in helping health care providers obtain the necessary telecommunications services, information services, and devices they need to provide telehealth services in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Please let me know if I can be of any further assistance.

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WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF
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June 22, 2020

The Honorable Chris Van Hollen
United States Senate
110 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Van Hollen:

I write in response to your letter regarding the COVID-19 pandemic and the Commission's implementation of its \$200 million COVID-19 Telehealth Program established under the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act. The ongoing pandemic has made clear how important telemedicine is for keeping Americans connected to their doctors, avoiding potential exposure to the virus by health care providers and other patients, and maintaining the social distancing necessary to slow the spread of the disease. I am committed to continuing to use the resources at the FCC's disposal to deal with this unprecedented national emergency.

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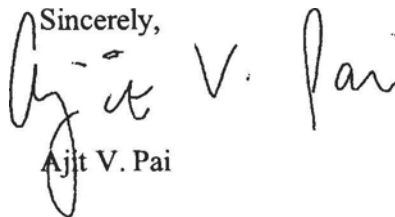
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June 22, 2020

The Honorable Ron Wyden
United States Senate
221 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Wyden:

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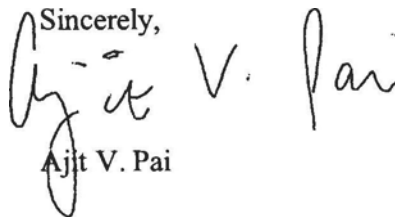
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